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Dinner At Mohsin Hall

The Dhaka University authorities have constituted an inquiry body to go into the recent case of food poisoning at Mohsin Hall. If we are all lucky, we will soon be able to know how three hundred students who had dinner in the hall dining space on Friday began to agonise, and physically at that, soon after they had their meal. The issue of luck is of vital importance here, for the very clear reason that in all the years since inquiry committees came into fashion, very little headway has been made in terms of concrete results. It is true that every inquiry body has gone to work in order to find out the causes behind certain happenings. The tragedy for the country is that there have hardly been any instances where the reports of inquiry committees or commissions have been made available to the public. It is this kind of legacy that worries people. And it is for such reasons that the fear arises that the probe into the food poisoning incident might not reach its logical conclusion.

Even so, there is always hope which people entertain. Where the Mohsin Hall incident is concerned, the miracle is that the students affected by the poisoning have managed to survive. That does not, however, preclude the thought that there was or could have been something deep-rooted about the whole scandalous show. The history of student politics is too open to allow for anything to be kept under the wraps. Of course, we are not saying that politics may have been at the root of the food poisoning incident. But given the nature of conditions that have persisted on the campus across the years, it is fairly easy for one to come to conclusions. In an age when friends have little hesitation in killing friends, and young men are gunned down in coffee shops (think of the college student who died the other day in Dhaka), it is not naive to imagine the worst about Mohsin Hall. There is far too much of a polarisation in society at this stage in our collective life to permit us to think of life in positive terms. So there remains the feeling that some kind of enmity, even rivalry, may have contributed to the sudden ailment of the young men at Mohsin Hall.

Or examine the other probability. Perhaps something was done rather inadvertently, to the food, that is. Well, mistakes are possible. But grievous mistakes? Well, here you have to pause, before you ponder. Shouldn't people who commit mistakes of the kind which jeopardise the lives of the many be taken to task? And that is just the point. The inquiry body which has gone into work over the matter must see to it that the sordid details about the incident are uncovered—and then brought before the country. That is not a tall order. Or is it?